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LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY



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Letters to the editor ♦♦

LWT prompts gift

Enclosed is a money order for \$1000. This gift is to be used for project 528—women and children in poverty.

I am making this gift to honor my sister, who died last year. My sister and I grew up in a small Midwestern town and were baptized and confirmed in a Lutheran church there. My sister worked in the area of social services.

When I read about designated gifts in an issue of *Lutheran Woman Today* [January 1993], I decided to make a gift to project 528. I know my sister would be pleased.

We grew up in a single-parent home (divorce) and lived on welfare for a while, as well as Mom's wages earned by cleaning houses. Through scholarship aid we both graduated from a university. We were both interested in the work described in project 528.

I will be looking for more articles in LWT on various aspects of this project.

Name withheld upon request

God, be in my mouth . . .

Today I went to my circle meeting, and I believe I innocently hurt a friend with my words.

Casually I told a neighbor about this busy month for our family: an anniversary of a daughter and her husband, several birthdays, two graduations of grandchildren, two confirmations of granddaughters and a commencement of a son-in-law from the seminary.

Did I sound proud, or as if I was complaining? Quickly a friend who is childless said, "Aren't you lucky?" Oops! I felt so badly.

Later, we discussed Paul's admonitions to the Corinthians [from the LWT Bible study]. Someone said, "Young people do reckless things, they often have no fear, (thinking) 'It won't happen to me.'" But it did to our only son, and he was killed. After 14 years, why does it still hurt even in a casual discussion?

When I came home I had a letter from another bereaved mother confessing that her son had really died from AIDS, not cancer. Also, he was a homosexual. What if she had been at our meeting and had heard our unemotional discussion on gays—the military, etc?

What are the answers? We must be compassionate, understanding and live in Christ through faith. We are told not to be complacent about our neighbors. We visit those at nursing homes and at the hospital. We take food to the shut-ins. . . . But in our Christian freedom, we must also watch those little words closely.

"God, be in my mouth and in my speaking."

*Elaine Bradley
Mendota, Illinois*

Cover Meditation Call

What does this issue's cover say to you? LWT invites its readers to write a meditation based on the cover and contents of this issue for possible publication in an upcoming issue of LWT. Length: 325 words or less. Deadline: January 5, 1994. Send your meditation to "November Cover Meditation," *Lutheran Woman Today*, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4189.

Long-Distance Lovers?

Arthur Simon



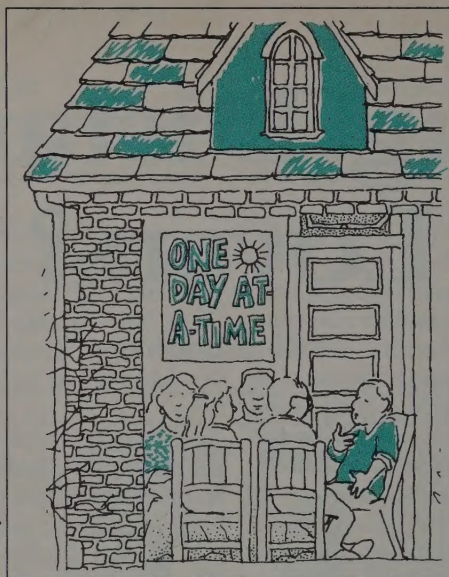
My favorite “Peanuts” cartoon shows Snoopy shivering in the snow. Along comes well-bundled Linus, who pats him on the head and says: “Be of good cheer. Be warmed and clothed.” The final sketch shows Linus walking away and Snoopy shivering as before, but now with a big question mark over his head.

The cartoon is a remarkable reflection on faith and human nature. It is the biblical text from which it is most literally taken (James 2:15-17). The writer of 1 John makes much the same point when he says:

“How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action” (3:17-18).

It is easy for us to love others by vague principle, and then fail when faced with specific, concrete opportunities. We may offer money and prayers to reach people overseas with the gospel, but keep our distance from those in our own community whose race or ethnic background differs from ours. We’re more comfortable paying or praying

for people far away than reaching out to those nearby. Or maybe we feel very warm toward the human race in general, but quickly turn off family members or neighbors



whose habits annoy us. You get the idea. We are all too often "long-distance lovers" who don't look so loving when put to the test. But such distantness undermines our mission in life.

What can we do about it?

Guilt is not the solution. No matter how well-deserved, guilt usually immobilizes us, because it reminds us of our captivity to sin. By itself, guilt does not make us more loving.

Grace, however, can. When God's forgiving love touches us and makes us whole, we are set free to love others. Only those who feel loved are able to extend love. Because God's own Son laid down his life to save us, we are released from our bondage to lovelessness and empowered to care about others. Now we can begin to see them through the heart and the mind of Christ.

"True," you say, "but I know that, and I'm still pretty loveless." Fortunately, the good news is not only that God loves us but that God

teaches us to celebrate grace. When God reaches us in Christ that's just the beginning of God's work in us. Now the real fun begins, for God who is no abstract love

wants to help us become lovers of others for Christ. Think of life that way and it begins to take on an exciting new purpose.

Loving suggestions

1. Start with members of your family. Where is a word of kindness or encouragement from you needed? Maybe the spouse or child who criticizes needs to hear you say "You're wonderful. I'm cheering for you!" Mother Teresa likes to tell United States audiences that some of the hungriest people in the world are in our own homes, hungry for love.
2. Be genuinely friendly to others. Even if you are shy, welcome visitors at church, for example. If you feel strange about doing that, think how estranged they may feel if you don't.
3. Take time for others. I once greeted an elderly neighborhood man with a routine, "How are you doing?" when to my astonishment he poured out a tale of woe. I had

**It is easy for us to love
others by vague principle,
and then fail when faced with
specific, concrete opportunities.**

ended to rush on. He made me realize how little meaning I had invested in my words.

More recently, someone from a small Bible study group at church stopped by to tell my wife and me of her personal difficulties. I doubt that she would have had the courage to do so had not the experience in our small group built up a sense of trust. Loving takes time.

Look for chances to reach out to those who are different from you in class, age, race, ethnic background, even religious belief. Immigrants or visitors from other countries, for example, provide an exceptional opportunity for us to cross barriers.

Be an example. When I was young, a friend I greatly admire put a generous tip on the counter for the waitress in a small cafe. When I expressed surprise, he said, "She's probably helping a son or daughter through college." That changed forever the way I think about tips.

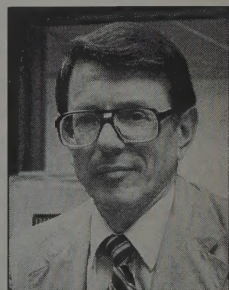
Take responsibility as a citizen. God does not remove us from the world when calling us to serve. Instead, as Martin Luther once put it, the world becomes the monastery in which we live out our sacred calling. Food-cause policy organizations, participation in the political process and various types of civic service provide opportunities. Citizen participation is an important way of preventing life—and love—from becoming meaningless abstraction.

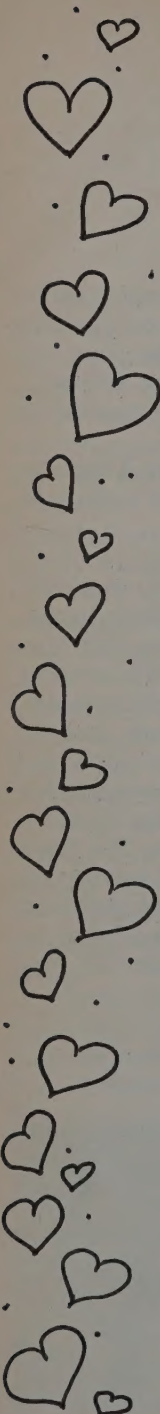
7. Pray for help to love specific people, and respond to specific needs. "If we pray the way we should, everything else follows," says David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World.

Start your own list and begin to discuss it in your home or with those closest to you.

There's no magic, no quick fix in learning how to celebrate God's love with others. We're swimming against the current, going upstream against prevailing values that include our own habits of mind and heart. So we struggle forward a step at a time, sometimes slipping back, always carried by grace. The more we practice the art of relating to others through the heart and mind of Christ, the more God helps us turn abstract love into the real thing. • **CAG**

Arthur Simon is director of the Washington office of Christian Children's Fund. He served as founding president of Bread for the World, a citizen's lobby on hunger, for almost two decades.





Lutheran Love Stories

"It was a match made in heaven." "God in heaven brought us together." "I believe that God made me and God made you, to share the gift of love."

For the almost 100 women who responded to Lutheran Woman Today's call in the July/August 1992 issue for "Lutheran Love Stories," these are statements of faith.

Those who responded shared stories of meeting, falling love with and marrying people who shared a faith, a church or a vocation—and now share a love and a family. Many couples met in Luther or Walther League, in their local congregation or at a Lutheran event. Others met by chance and became Lutheran together. Our thanks to all who contributed—it seems the possibilities for Lutherans falling love are endless. Read on for some good romance, some good laughs—and if you don't have a Lutheran love story of your own—for some good ideas!

"I'll never marry a pastor"

"My dad was a Lutheran pastor, and at times I tired of the 'fishbowl' experience of being the preacher's daughter," writes Lori Cedarholm Forbes of Albert Lea, Minnesota. "Many times during my growing-up years I loudly exclaimed, 'For sure, I'll never marry a pastor!' I think my parents believed me."

After college graduation, Lori headed off to be a counselor at a Lutheran camp and met Jeff. "He arrived a day or two late for camp. He had an earthy look about him in his plaid shirt, and I thought he was here to talk about plants and wildlife. He was kind of cute. The camp director introduced him as the newest camp counselor . . . and went on to say that Jeff had just finished his first year of seminary. Suddenly I didn't look so cute! But it was hard to avoid Jeff—he was the most unusual seminarian I had ever met. Gradually Je

started to look kind of cute again." Lori and Jeff were married in August 1984.

sweet smile

Having heard of Kurt, a young, eligible bachelor pastor, while attending the Texas District Convention in the spring of 1937, I smiled sweetly as we passed each other," writes Frances Hartmann of Yorktown, Texas. Three years later: following some subtle hints and gentle prodding from my former boss, Kurt came 150 miles to visit me on a very cold day, to my two-room school in Goliad County. The other teacher and I lived in a four-room teacherage where we hurriedly lit the kerosene lamps and hastily fried a chicken at the kerosene stove. During supper, the rather tough wing was trying to cut flew promptly to the floor. We all laughed,



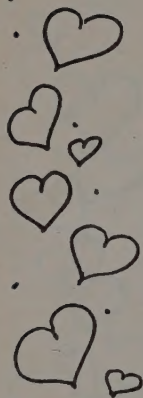
Do you promise to marry and bear each other's burdens?"

At I was very embarrassed." Kurt and Frances were married in August 1940, on the sixth anniversary of Kurt's ordination. The sermon text was, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

matchmaker Aunt Dorothy

John's aunt and uncle were the organist and choir director at my home church in Columbus," writes Sherry Kaufman of Clyde, Ohio. "As I completed plans to attend Capital University, they told me about a nephew of theirs who would be in my class at school. John's Aunt Dorothy eagerly speculated that I would 'just love her nephew Johnny.' I was sure I would be otherwise.

"When college began I did indeed meet the nephew. As he was persuaded by his aunt and uncle to sing in our church choir, we became acquainted and a friendship developed. We



spent most of our freshman year at college talking on the phone since I was commuting from home—the range and depth of our conversations amazed us both. There was seemingly no subject we could not talk about with so much in common, including our faith. We became best friends—I was afraid dating might spoil it.

“But when spring arrived and John invited me to the formal May Day Dance, romance blossomed along with the lilacs. Aunt Dorothy, bless her heart, was right: I just love her nephew Johnny, and still do!” Sherry and John have been married for 27 years.

Go to church and find a man?

“Werner and I met on the first day of the ELCA’s Consultation on Ministry with Persons with Disabilities—as we



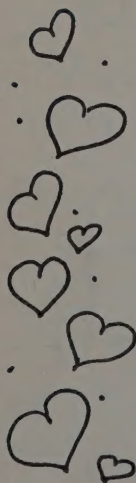
Werner Burkat and Jacklyn Lohr Burkat

waited in the hotel lobby for transportation to the Lutheran Center,” writes Jacklyn Lohr Burkat of De Pere, Wisconsin. “I was at that hotel only because the bathroom at the first hotel to which I’d been assigned could not accommodate my scooter. It was not love at first sight, but interest that led to our eating several meals together and sitting together at a few sessions and at church on Sunday.

“As Werner lived in Philadelphia and I lived in Green Bay, Wisconsin, I told him upon leaving Chicago that I’d be coming East in 1993 to attend the Women of the ELCA Second Triennial Convention in Washington, D.C. He told me later that he decided he wasn’t going to wait that long to see me again.

“Two days after we left Chicago, flowers arrived at my office in Green Bay. More came two weeks after that and again, two weeks later. Werner definitely got my attention. We were engaged on Valentine’s Day and married in August 1992.

“Upon hearing of our engagement, the daughter of a friend of mine asked how to find a man. My reply was, ‘Go to church!’ ”



Darcy's not telling

I had just graduated from nurse's training when the local Luther League needed chaperones for a canoe trip to the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota. I was about to start my job in my hometown hospital in Nebraska, but needed to be outside for a little while first. I couldn't wait to volunteer," writes Karen Mickelson of Mt. Vernon, South Dakota, "it sounded like pure heaven.

"What I didn't know when I volunteered was that a young man from South Dakota who had been on previous trips was going along too! What an eventful trip this was to be!

"The weather was perfect, the fellowship delightful, and very slowly and almost without notice or thought, Darcy and I fell in love. One week was a whirlwind of activity and, as good times go, went by far too rapidly. As we said our goodbyes, neither of us was brave enough to actually verbalize what was in our hearts and I wondered if I would ever see him again.

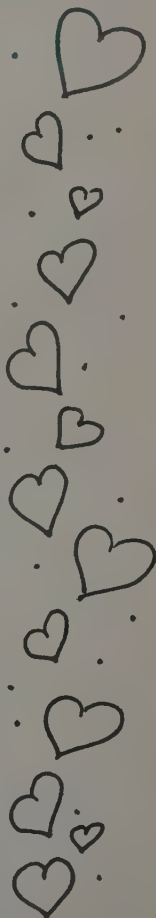
"Imagine my surprise and joy when we were unpacking the cars that night and discovered an extra sleeping bag. I'll never know if that bag was forgotten on purpose (after all, how could he possibly *forget* it after hauling it around every day for a whole week?!), because Darcy's not telling. But we were married before the year's end."

The fun pastors

As a pastor, I always swore that I would never marry a pastor. I knew that it meant trouble," writes the Rev. Debra Reuter of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. "Our story began at a stewardship conference. I arrived late for dinner and looked for a familiar face. I found one of my seminary classmates, whose table was full, but he pointed to another and said, 'Here are fun pastors over there.' Wanting to be clever, I approached the table saying, 'I hear this is where the fun pastors are.'

"That would be me!" Fred responded. He continued to try to be witty all evening. He was a little obnoxious, but kind of cute. His humor began to grow on me and I made a new friend out of this fun pastor. As the conference ended, he offered free tickets for a local amusement park. It was our first date and 9 months later, we broke our vows to never marry another pastor and took vows to become husband and wife. Three years later, we are thrilled to be serving a congregation together. God has put us right where we need to be."

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and almost
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What would my mother think?

Women at Custer Lutheran Fellowship, Custer, South Dakota, wrote their love stories at a circle meeting. One of the group, Ellen Winter, shares this story: "We were both at Achievement Days at the South Dakota State Fair grounds."



(Beep) ... Hi, Emily ... this is Barney ... will you marry me? ... Give me a call when you decide ... bye ... (beep).

I was with another guy—but Jim decided he liked me so he said, 'Come on tiger, let's go for an airplane ride.' The guy I was with said 'go ahead'—so I did! To the airport!

"Jim was warming up the plane and it shook—so did I. I kept wondering what my mother would think. We flew over his folks' place and he kept pointing things out, but I was scared to look. I'm not sure how long we

flew, but it seemed too long. When he landed, he came in so fast that I threw up right in my lap. He wanted me to meet his instructor but I said, 'No, just find me a bathroom to clean up in!'"

Ellen and Jim have been married for 34 years.

Lasting love

The "Lutheran Love Stories" sent to LWT are testimonies of lasting loves and marriages. Lorene Trytten of Stever Point, Wisconsin, writes: "Fifty golden years and six daughters and nine grandchildren later, the romance is alive and well. You can find us in church on Sunday morning."

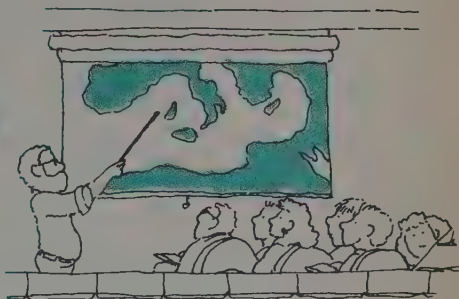
Emma Slaven Lewis of Birmingham, Alabama, writes: "My husband and I met 57 years ago, and it was through the church that we were married. I am now a widow, I live alone but God has richly blessed me with good health, two wonderful sons and their families. My main interest in life is in church."

And Mary Short of Stanley, Virginia, writes, "As we finish our 20th year of marriage, Bruce and I are thankful that God brought us, separately, to the same congregation, helped us share with each other our joys as well as our difficulties, and blessed our marriage."

Ah, true love. A match made in heaven? Of course! • •

—*Cynthia J. Mickelson*

The Church's Torch in the Hands of Baby Boomers



Kay Soder-Alderfer and David L. Alderfer

We recently attended Kay's 25th high-school reunion. She was asked to fill out a questionnaire to update classmates on her life.

One question difficult to answer was, "What do you remember most about high school?"

After some thought, Kay realized that what she remembered most from high school was the day President Kennedy was shot.

At her reunion we learned that more than half of the class also associated their high-school days with President Kennedy's death.

"It was more than his death," wrote one of Kay's classmates in a reunion booklet. "It was the death of my innocence and my belief in a better world. I think a part of each of us died that day."

Now, 30 years later, many of this generation are beginning to heal from that event and other traumas of the '60s: Vietnam; the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy; the freedom rides for civil rights; riots in the cities; the sexual revolution; "recreational" drugs; the Chicago Democratic Convention and much more.

Adding adolescents . . . volcanic events

We were not the only ones to experience these traumas. At the time of these volcanic events, we were budding adolescents not equipped to deal with such a land-

**Loyalists
were raised
in the church
and stayed
with the
church.**

scape of shattered dreams.

Events and timing were probably the twin factors that drew us close to each other, and apart from institutions and from adults who had no answers while we swirled in questions. Those questions launched us on different journeys of seeking.

We are but one part of that population known as "baby boomers," born between the years of 1946 and 1964. During the 1990s, baby boomers—who make up more than one-quarter of the United States population—will be hitting midlife. The first baby boomers will turn 50.

Baby boomers now occupy the White House. Some are in critical decision-making positions within business, politics, health care and other institutions. Many pastors and other church leaders are boomers.

This group of 76 million people has had an enormous impact on North American society in the past three decades. And baby boomers will continue to influence our society and its institutions. Some fear the church and religion will never again be the same. They are likely right.

Who are the boomers?

As with any population group, it is easy to draw stereotypes and difficult to draw accurate generalizations. It is important to remember that baby boomers are people—individuals who have been greatly influenced by media, by society and by historical events.

Wade Clark Roof, professor of religion and society at the University of California, Santa Barbara, can offer us some clues regarding baby boomers. Roof led an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America-sponsored event earlier this year for people interested in ministry with baby boomers. See his book, *A Generation of Seekers* (Harper San Francisco, 1993), for development of many of the concepts discussed below.

According to Roof, one-third (33 percent) of all baby boomers are **loyalists**. Loyalists were raised in the church and stayed with the church. Generally, loyalists were the baby boomers least touched by events of the '60s and '70s. For them congregational participation is duty; most loyalists see God as a father and feel God is personally involved in their lives.

Another 25 percent of baby boomers are what Roof calls **returnees**. As with previous generations, many baby boomers return to church for the sake of their children. Boomers may also return to church when they

a midlife crisis and are looking for answers to life's questions.

The returnees were more involved in the social changes of the '60s and '70s than the loyalists. Returnees do not display "brand loyalty." When choosing a church, denomination is less important than "the feel" of a specific congregation. Attending church is not a matter of duty, but something you do if it meets your needs.

Returning, not joining

Returnees "shop around" for a church where they feel comfortable and wanted. Often they make their decisions to come back or to keep searching based on one or two visits. While they are *returning* to churches, they are not necessarily *joining* churches.

Returnees attend church less regularly than loyalists. They look for parishes with a variety of good programs, including music, small groups, children's programs, Twelve Step recovery groups, support groups for singles and other special-interest groups.

The largest group of baby boomers (42 percent), however, fall into a group called **dropouts**. Within that group, there are two significant subgroups: the **believers-but-not-belongers** and the **seekers**.

The believers-but-not-belongers (BBNBs) have little contact with institutional religion, but they insist they are religious or spiritual. This group was most touched by the changes of the '60s and the '70s. Their images of God include that of a mother and a "Unifying Presence."

A majority of this group believes all religions are equally good and true.

BBNBs are not opposed to organized religion. They are often religious consumers: two-thirds would turn to a congregation for a Baptism, a wedding or a funeral. This group makes up 28 percent of all baby boomers.

The seekers are a fourth type of boomer, who are spiritual rather than religious. They were deeply affected by the '60s and '70s and express their beliefs in personal quests. Choice is essential; life is an adventure. They place great emphasis on the unity of things, balancing being and doing, belief and feeling, and the

Returnees

often return to the church for the sake of their children.

Churches will either embrace the baby boomer conception of the gospel, or churches will cease to exist.
— Wade Clark Roof

Dropouts:

Believers-but-not-belongers and seekers

BBNBs have little contact with institutional religion, but they insist they are religious or spiritual.

Seekers were deeply touched by the '60s and '70s, and express their beliefs in personal quests.

inner and outer worlds. Roof compares them to the ancient mystics.

The remaining 5 percent of boomer dropouts are non-religious and non-spiritual.

What does all this mean for the church in the next decade? No one knows for sure. It certainly means that traditional organized religion is in a state of flux. Yet Roof holds out these messages: Baby boomers are taking different paths in their spiritual quests, and 5 percent of them are quite serious about their religious and spiritual journeys.

"You are the future," Roof tells baby boomers. "Churches will either embrace your conception of the gospel, or they will cease to exist."

Congregations and baby boomers

How might a congregation embrace baby boomers?

- Invite baby boomers to commit themselves to short-term tasks, rather than long-term commitments. Involve boomers as lecturers, ushers and program leaders in one- to four-week stints.
- Hold an adult forum panel led by baby boomers. Be sure to include both first-wave boomers (born 1946-53) and younger boomers (born 1954-64).
- Hold an intergenerational event for boomers and older adults. Boomers need to be listened to; they also need to listen. Have everyone bring in a photo that they consider important to their faith beliefs or spirituality. In small groups, share your stories.

If the church truly is the vessel of God's hope, love, forgiveness and reconciliation, there is a chance that we can, with God's help, build healing bridges to help strengthen community.

It is important for all of us to remember that "all we like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6). Not just the baby boomers; not just any one group of people.

Remember the parable of the lost sheep. With baby boomers, it's merely a matter of more than one being lost and needing loving care to return.

The torch is being passed to the baby boomers. While we do not yet see clearly what that will mean, we must trust that the flame of the Holy Spirit will be involved.

• c
The Rev. David Alderfer, a loyalist, serves as the ELCA director for rosters and statistics in the Office of the Secretary. Sister Kay Soder-Alderfer, an ELCA deaconess, is a spiritual director at Gentle Pathways, Downers Grove, Illinois. She lives comfortably with one foot in the loyalist camp and another in the seekers camp.

Affection and the Congregation

Martin E. Marty

The United States and its churches are coming apart, observers charge. Denominations and congregations divide. There are factions and sometimes schisms. What is holding congregations and denominations together?

One important piece of glue that holds us together is our “common affection.” Affection? Affection in nation or church or congregation? Get serious! I am.

But first we have to clear things up about the word. I do not mean “affection” in the Valentine’s Day card sense of the term: a superficial, gooey, sentimental gush of emotions. “Common affection” means having shared a set of experiences that evoke similar emotions and responses.

Affection in this sense is like what we feel when we experience with others a blizzard, a hurricane or the attack of an enemy. We feel affection when we pitch in to help a family whose home has been destroyed, or whose child’s illness and treatment have drained the family’s resources. We have affection because we have been through a depression or war or struggles for rights *together*.

Affection in this sense is much like what we experience with kinship. We do not naturally *like* all the people to whom we are tied by birth and blood or, more randomly, through in-lawhood and marriage. But we have mourned together at gravesides, smiled for photographs and looked at albums, rejoiced at Baptisms, rummaged through souvenirs, exchanged phone calls or letters, even argued over inheritances.

The occasional family reunion picnic is not all sentimental and gooey. It includes plenty of gossip; yet even gossip, which can be sinful, reflects the fact that we are bound together, and

have to care. And do care. And, for all its limits, we would not want to miss next year's reunion.

The family reunion picnic can be spun out as a parable for church and congregational life: We must have common experiences in order

to care, and we must allow for affection to develop. Otherwise we come apart, and there is no chance for distinctively Christian love to be anything more than words.

How to advance affection? Through story. I like to refer congregations to a book by sociologist Robert Wuthnow titled *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves* (Princeton, 1991). Wuthnow tells the story of the Good Samaritan and asks something important in congregational life: Why do people volunteer for services that show Good Samaritan-like compassion? (They do, you know: An impressive percentage of busy Americans volunteer, and the majority do so through their congregations or other religious agencies.) His conclusion: "Their stories . . . provide an explanation of how and why . . . people had become involved in caring. Having stories to tell was a vitally important part of their caring."

You cannot command people to



volunteer. You cannot successfully over the long haul deceive, seduce, beguile, cajole, harangue or weary people into showing care. People in community and congregation show compassion when they hear and tell stories about

the experiences that shaped them—such as the one about the Good Samaritan or stories about Jesus. The acts of compassion, and the stories that motivated them, become the common experiences that foster the growth of affection.

We must have common experiences in order to care, and we must allow for affection to develop.

I know of a congregation that tried out a survey of attitudes as part of a self-discovery process. When the surveyors were finished they pointed to what seemed to be a problematic feature. Each member was asked to list his or her three closest friends, then note which of these friends were fellow members of the congregation. The survey takers found that relatively few best-friend hookups were within the borders of the congregation. That was supposed to be bad.

Was it? We pick up friends in childhood, far from where we now live; from college, which eventually we leave behind; from residence somewhere; from work and play; from whatever accidents and coincidences bring people together. The local congregation might provide some of these circumstances, but it will not necessarily do so, and is not even likely to, in the case of modern cities. But must that mean absence of affection? Not at all, in the sense that we are using the word here: the experience of common experiences, in which we have mutual emotional responses.

The congregation in question was a vital one. People interceded for each other; they volunteered together; they were stewards of God's gifts. They brought casseroles to the homes of members who returned from gravesides, and company to those in the hospital. They were not all ones of each other, people who were like finding like. The congregation supplied them with something alongside friendship. Call it spiritual kinship. A congregation of best friends may produce elements of beauty, but it can also be a cluster of riddles, a knitting of hard-to-break-to circles. A good congregation includes unlike finding unlike, and forming bonds. Then come the good stories.

I have talked about affection, experience, story; about kinship and strangers. But not about love. Not about Christian love. Not about 1 Corinthians 13 kind of love. That love is called *agape*, which, we learned long ago, is like God's love

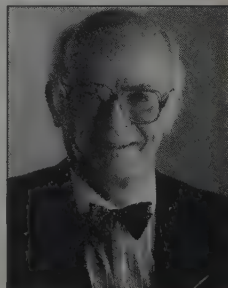
for us in Christ: spontaneous, unselfish, not seeing something of worth in its object, but only someone in need. But think again: Where does *agape* love get nourished,

**Acts of compassion,
and the stories that
motivated them, become
the common experiences
that foster the growth
of affection.**

tested and enjoyed? In that company of people with whom we—otherwise individualized in our spiritual searches—find ourselves forming a company of former strangers and exiles, who have a citizenship in heaven, our affections set “on things above.” But we have some realization of them here below, with a congregation that links us with the larger church and a world in need of *agape* love itself. Experience that community, let affection grow, tell stories, and 1 Corinthians 13 will come to life. • **CG**

Martin E. Marty, an ELCA pastor, is the Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Modern Christianity at the University of Chicago.

Dr. Marty and his wife, Harriet, are members of Ascension Lutheran Church in Riverside, Ill.



When Love Goes Wrong

Connie Winter-Eulberg



I met Sally (not her real name) in a Sunday school room of a church that was halfway between her home and my office. She was attractive and professionally dressed. Her smile was genuine and her voice sincere.

I started out by telling her about the Ministry of Healing, Inc., and how its task is ministry with people who have experienced sexual and domestic violence. This violence causes a spiritual crisis and the survivors often need healing surrounding spiritual issues.

Sally listened carefully as I talked about how this ministry provides education to clergy and laypeople on how to do ministry with survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Her eyes widened as I explained my work with the Lutheran church regarding clergy sexual misconduct.

She began her story by talking of her marriage to a minister who is well-educated and loved by his parishioners. She spoke of how she respected his ministry, but that when he was with her at home he was a different person. He had been physically, verbally and psychologically abusing her for years. She did not understand how he could be such a good marriage counselor and have such a violent marriage himself. Just days ago, she heard him on the phone telling someone how battering was not acceptable and how God did not want that to

happen in a marriage. After hanging up he verbally abused Sally.

I explained to her the cycle of violence: Tension builds, there is violence, followed by a honeymoon period of apologies and promises, and then the cycle repeats. Sally told her story of building tension and violence. She said that there was a honeymoon stage in the past when he would say he was sorry, and when he was nice to her. But, she said, lately there seemed to be no honeymoon stage anymore—just silence.

Sally told me she did not want to leave her husband. "I still love him," she said. "After all, in 1 Corinthians 13 it says love is patient and kind and love endures all things. I suppose you think that I am crazy for still loving him."

"No, I don't think you are crazy," I responded. "There are still times when you get a glimpse of the man you fell in love with, and you have memories of how he used to act."

Sally continued by saying: "I feel so distant from God. My husband always tells me that I am ugly and fat and then I feel unworthy of God's love. Does God love me?" Her plaintive words underscored one of the many spiritual crises that victims of violence experience.

I told Sally that God had created her, a beautiful, intelligent and loving woman. In fact, God created her in God's image. I told her that God loves her so much that God redeemed her through Jesus. I explained that in baptism she was filled with the Holy Spirit and made holy to God.

I then read to her from 1 Corinthians 3:16-17:

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are" (Revised Standard Version).

The conversation continued as I talked to Sally about how God sees her body as a temple and a sacred place. I told her that God does not want a sacred temple to be hit or verbally abused. Just as we would never think of going up to the altar in our church and hitting it with a hammer and breaking it apart, so God does not want us to be hit and broken.

After much prayer and with support, Sally made two important decisions. Sally decided to stay with the marriage, but change how she was playing out her role in the marriage. She told her husband she would no longer stand for verbal abuse, and if he hit her again, she would leave him at that moment.

**Tension builds,
there is violence,
followed by a
honeymoon period
of apologies and
promises, and then
the cycle repeats.**

Sally is staying for many reasons. She feels that she could not, financially or emotionally, make it on her own. She also stays because she loves that part of her husband that was at one time good to her. This is the person she sees when he is with parishioners. Sally knows that she is not getting what she needs from the relationship, but for now she is willing to stay with it. After months of the healing process, she understands that she deserves a loving, healthy relationship and is beginning to rebuild her relationship with God.

Sometimes love takes us places that are not romantic or loving. Sometimes those places are full of rage, anger and violence. Sometimes we wake up wondering how we got ourselves into such a place, where God can feel so far away.

If you are or have been in this place, remember that you are loved by God. You are God's creation. You are lovable and beautiful. You are valued by God. God does not want you to be hurt, hit, slapped or told you are ugly or stupid. You are a temple of God and need to be treated as such.

"For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are." • GA

The Rev. Connie Winter-Eulberg, Kansas City, Missouri, is developer and director of the Ministry of Healing, Inc. She is married to an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America pastor and is the mother of Katie, 4, and Zachary, 1.



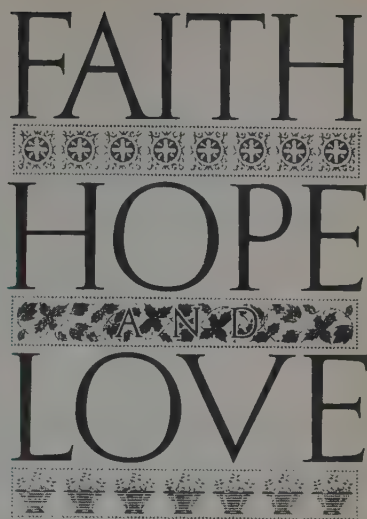
What to do if you are being battered:

1. Seek help from a health professional or pastor.
2. Call the battered women's shelter nearest you. (Look in the phone book or see #3.)
3. Call the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence at (202) 638-6388 or (303) 839-1852 for the number of your state coalition and for local resources.
4. Read *Getting Free: You Can End Abuse and Take Back Your Life*, expanded 2nd edition, by Ginny NiCarthy (Seal Press, 1986).
5. Read *Keeping The Faith* by Marie M. Fortune (Harper San Francisco, 1987).
6. Do one thing for yourself each day. Take a bath. Read a book. Go walking. Get a babysitter and take a nap. . .

Session 11

The Greatest of These Is Love

Mary E.F. Albing



Study Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
Political Basis: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Memory Verse

*And now faith, hope, and love abide, these
 three; and the greatest of these is love."*

1 Corinthians 13:13

Overview

One of the most familiar biblical texts, 1 Corinthians 13 depicts the love of the Christian community for one another and the enduring gift of God's love for all in Jesus Christ. In this chapter, Paul gives reasons why love is truly a "more excellent way" (12:31).

Closing

*Gracious God, the extraordinary love of your
 Son for the world gives us new faith and hope.
 Help us to value love above all the gifts given to
 us and help us to love you and to serve one
 another. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.
 Amen*

Understanding the Word

Love: "A More Excellent Way"

Throughout the first 12 chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul relentlessly moves the Corinthians away from their self-serving attitudes. He insists that they concentrate instead on using their gifts to build up one another in all areas of life.

In Chapter 13, Paul shows the Corinthians a "more excellent way" (12:31). In other words, love for others is to replace the Corinthians' desire for special gifts or status.

1

Read 13:1-3. *According to Paul, what gifts are meaningless without love? Why do you think these gifts are worth nothing without love?*

For Paul, love is a divine gift from God, not a human possibility that originates in the heart. Therefore, while other spiritual gifts may be misused, true love from God is always used for others.

2

Read verses 4-7. *In these verses, 15 action words and phrases describe love. Write down as many as you can find.*

What an amazing summary of love! Paul begins with two positive descriptions of love, then eight negatives of what love is not, and finally five constructive ways in which love acts.

3

The 15 qualities of love are also the reverse of the behavior Paul sees in some Corinthian Christians. What specific acts do verses 4-7 speak against (in 1 Corinthians see 1:11; 10:23-24; 11:20-21; 14:26-28)?

Read 13:8-13. In these verses, Paul returns to some of the spiritual gifts mentioned in Chapter 12. While these gifts are important to Paul and should be encouraged among the Corinthians, he asks his readers to value other qualities more highly.

4

According to verses 8-13, what will happen to prophecies, tongues and knowledge? According to verses 12 and 13, what will happen to faith, hope and love? Why?

Paul compares his abilities as a child to the speech and knowledge he has acquired as an adult to demonstrate the relative importance of the Corinthians' gifts compared to faith, hope and love. Not only do children lack the same capacities for speech or knowledge as adults, they sometimes do not realize their limitations.

When God's kingdom comes fully, Paul writes, believers will "know fully" what has previously been known "only in part" (verse 12). Spiritual gifts will no longer be needed—love will take their place. And love, like God, is eternal.

Interpreting the Word

Faith, Hope, and Love Abide

Paul challenges the Corinthian community to value love, which is eternal, over their own gifts, which will pass away. Every time and place, personal achievement and self-concern keep people from being "all things to all people" (22).

Look again at 13:1-3. Only the most exceptional person could accomplish such heroism as is described in the "if" parts of the first three verses.

5

Who in your mind stands out as a hero or heroine? Why? Paul says that in spite of great gifts and exceptional achievements, those who do not love others "gain nothing" (verse 3). How do you feel about this statement?

In verses 4-7, Paul moves from talking about heroic-type actions to describing love. How impossible love seems! Who could possibly live up to Paul's list? The Corinthians, who thought they were spiritual paragons, evidently had not lived up to the list. Why else would Paul have included the list in

his letter to them?

A different kind of love is Paul's goal—one that is imperishable, one that remains with us into eternity with God. And in order to understand how love fits in with the cross and the proclamation of the gospel, we must look at Chapter 13 in light of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

The Love of Jesus

When Jesus came to earth and died on a cross, he became love itself. He made very clear the reason for coming to live among humanity: "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). Jesus is the one who fulfilled all demands of love, who cared for others, who gave of himself completely without thought of gain.

Of the many ways in which Jesus "lives love" throughout his life and ministry, none is as apparent as the incidents during his passion and death: compassion for the high priest's slave in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Luke 22:50-51) and for his mother at the crucifixion (see John 19:26-27).

6

What other specific passages of Scripture, or examples about Jesus' life, fulfill the demands of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (see Luke 23:39-43; Matthew 5:43-48; John 13:5)?

Jesus showed the world what love is and what is required to obtain it. Love requires no less than putting aside our selfish desires and allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us for the good of others.

7

How can we draw out the good qualities of others who seem "smothered in the dust"? In what ways is this task both a challenge and a blessing?

The great deceit that we perpetuate within ourselves, however, is that it is by our own effort and strength that we become loving, that we become godly. We are willing to make sacrifices—but on our terms, not God's.

The cross symbolizes the sins Christ took upon himself to redeem the world. Consequently, the practical acts of love that Christians are able to perform because of Christ are sometimes called “crosses.”

Certain individuals may perceive such crosses to be unusually large burdens or newsworthy acts of faith and mercy. Some live “martyred” lives, secretly hoping that others will notice their great sacrifices. Others think that loving others and bearing a cross means existing as a doormat for others. It is important to remember that truly loving others and building up the community of faith means doing the small daily tasks faithfully and saying no to some things. Unlike the old cliché, love is not blind—rather, it “rejoices in the truth” (1 Corinthians 13:6) and strives for perfection in God.

8

Think of times when love is not patient, kind or during all things (see 5:11; 11:20-22). What does this statement mean to you: “Christian love not always nice, but it is always real”?

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul is impatient with some of the Corinthians—and rightfully so. Love does not rule out primand (see 4:14; 11:17).

Living the Word

Building Community through Love

Throughout his letter, Paul challenges the Corinthian Christians to give up their impatient, unkind, quarrelsome, self-centered ways. He encourages them to use their gifts for the good of the whole community.

Building community and acting on behalf of others may often involve quiet activities that not too many notice. Sometimes our Christian acts may border on the heroic—caring for chronically ill spouse, dealing compassionately with elderly parents. Other actions involve the love, compassion and respect we can show to one another from day to day—dealing patiently with children’s questions, encouraging a friend or spouse, or interrupting a favorite television program to help neighbor with a task.

9

What are some of the day-to-day Christian actions you perform for others? What actions have others performed for you?

In *Homing in the Presence* (Winston Press, 1978), Gerhard Frost writes of such a small action of love:

I had stopped [in the grocery store] to pick up a few small items, including tea. So there I was, prowling through the supermarket, when at last I found the tea shelf. But I also found something I wasn't expecting—a frozen chicken! Behold, a chicken with the tea!

Finding it still rock-hard, I returned it to its proper place and said to the poultry man, "I can't understand how anybody could do a thing like this."

"Oh, it happens all the time," he said, barely looking up from his work.

What needless trouble we cause for each other! A little consideration and a few kind words go a long way. . . . How much better off the world would be if we all had more compassion.

Love is quite a pragmatic thing, not so much a romantic notion, not terribly heroic. It is concern and manifestations of caring for the well-being of others on a daily basis.

God's amazing love for us in Jesus empowers us to focus on the needs of others. At the same time, it makes us secure in the knowledge that love bears all our cares and sins, believes in us as valuable individuals, and continues to endure with us through all our trials and temptations.

10

How does knowing you are loved completely by God give you the ability to set aside personal gain and serve others? In what ways do our daily tasks become offerings to God?

The challenges of 1 Corinthians 13—focusing on the whole community, using gifts appropriately and understanding the complexity of love—are not limited to us as individuals.

we grow in our comprehension of love, we may begin to expand its use in our own congregations.

11

How would you summarize Paul's message in Chapter 13 for your congregation? What good things have come about in your community or congregation because of sharing gifts of love?

As we continue to mature as Christians, we must remember that love changes right along with us. In her book *To Love as God Loves: Conversations with the Early Church* (Fortress Press, 1987), theologian Roberta C. Bondi writes:

Our growing love is a continuous movement into God's love, as the ancient Christian writers say. But because God's love is without limit, and because being human means sharing in the image of God, we can never in our human loving reach the limit of our ability to love. This means that though we may love fully at any one moment, it is not perfect love unless that love continues to grow. . . . That we can never "arrive," then, is cause for celebration . . . because it grows out of our likeness to God.

Looking Ahead

Session 12, the final session in *Faith, Hope, and Love: A Study in 1 Corinthians*, focuses on the final resurrection. In anticipation of the session, you may wish to read 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, 20-28, 35-58 and learn the memory verse: "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:7). •

The Rev. Mary Albing is pastor of United Lutheran Church, Minot, North Dakota, with her husband, the Rev. Bob Albing.

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Love on the Line

Miriam L. Woolbert

"If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1).

St. Paul's words about speaking in love hold true for many "languages": the language of the printed and spoken word, the language of music, the language of the visual arts. Who, though, would have thought of expressions of love in the "language" of the office—or home—computer?

Computers have increased the efficiency and capacity of individuals to manage information in a very short time. It is when they are connected in a network, however, that the people using them really begin to shine through—and speak through—the hardware.

LutherLink, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America computer network, connects about 300 members of the ELCA—clergy and lay, men and women—with each other and with another 3000 people of faith all over North America, with additional links around the world. We exchange news and information, opinions and needs, via a process called "meetings," which resemble conversations at a gathering or party. Each electronic meeting gathers

round its own specific topic, with a descriptive title to attract interested participants.

As with face-to-face conversations, love is sometimes the topic of discussion, but love also develops among the participants and is expressed in many ways.

During the time that an electronic meeting titled "LOVE" existed, love was also being expressed in another meeting called "PRAYER CHAPEL"—an ongoing example of conversational prayer—as well as via other meetings created to develop caring communities. It even popped up in the meeting "MENOPAUSE," where women share experiences and information about this important change in their bodies and lives.

Bess (whose name has been changed) discovered through a biopsy that she had "typical proliferative hyperplasia" in her breasts, a precancerous condition of multiplying abnormal cells. She decided to have both breasts removed before it could develop into cancer. Her dilemma revolved around whether to have implants, reconstructive surgery or nothing additional done at the same time.

Thanks to the computer, within days Bess had heard from half a dozen women from all over the country, some with stories of others who had faced the same options, one a critical-care nurse who was able to describe what each option meant—and even a creative suggestion of decorative tattoos to disguise the scars!

Every note to Bess expressed love with statements like "my heart goes out to you," "I am not alone in feeling your grief and admiring your courage," or "May you find grace and blessing in the midst of pain and loss." A couple of books were recommended as well.

Many prayers of supplication were said as Bess went to surgery, and at least as many prayers of thanksgiving when she came back on-line a week later to report that her surgery had happened just in time: The surgeons had found a small spot of noninvasive carcinoma (cancer) in the tissue they removed. She shared with her on-line family a moving poem she had written the night before surgery. In this poem, she wrote of deciding not to have reconstruction, of being "finished with all that is fake and false."

"Now I will be more woman than ever before. . . . Sheltered for a brief while in the ample bosom of God, I will be free and

**Through LutherLink,
we exchange news and
information, opinions
and needs, via a process
called "meetings."**

I will chase my spirit. . . .Without breasts, I will be whole

"LOVE IS," another meeting that was on LutherLink, was defined as "a lighthearted look at definitions of love." Here are some contributed definitions:

LOVE IS . . . taking chicken soup to a neighbor with a cold . . . having to say you're sorry . . . a process of becoming more real . . . giving each other the true security which is freedom to be safely vulnerable in honest intimate relationships . . . taking out the dog, even though your spouse is the one still wearing shoes . . . the childlike excitement you feel when writing love notes (especially on-line!).

Because the on-line community brings together many who live in rural or otherwise isolated situations, Di Summerford's contribution was one of the best: "Love introducing LutherLink and a modem to a person who is shut-in or otherwise disabled." What a great gift! • CA

Miriam L. ("Mim") Woolbert, pictured on page 28, is a specialist in the ELCA Department for Communication's resource information and networks group.

Ecunet and its LutherLink

LutherLink is the Lutheran branch of Ecunet, a "network of networks" enabling people in 20 different religious groups to communicate locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

The ELCA as well as other faith groups provide news releases, documents and resources, which members may then "download" and use in newsletters, bulletins and other communication pieces.

Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and Inter-Lutheran Disaster Response news are available hot off the keyboard. There are several "meetings" (electronic conversations) offering news and information about women, such as our own "WOMENS NETWORK NEWS" and the branches related to the Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women. There are also many informal gathering places such as our Lutheran "TABLE TALK," "LAITY ONLINE" and "FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES."

Anyone with access to a computer and modem can become a part of the LutherLink family. Membership is \$11 per month, plus telephone charges, which vary depending on when and how the calls are made. Call the ELCA Resource Information Service (1-800-638-3522) to ask for a free LutherLink information kit. •

—M.L.W.

Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Groenewold

♦ VISON offers specials on violence against women

ISON, the interfaith cable TV network partly supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, will air dramas and documentaries on violence against women November 15-19 from 9 to 10 p.m. (EST). Domestic violence, rape, clergy abuse, the abuse of power and sexual harassment will be among the topics explored. A concluding program on November 19 will feature a live call-in special with a panel of experts.

Give us strength, O God, as we break the silence that often surrounds abuse and violence.

Congregations study peace

ELCA congregations are encouraged to consider a new ELCA study on peace. The study is the first step in the development of a social statement on global peace that will be considered at the 1995 ELCA churchwide Assembly. The study can be used in adult forums, Women's groups, the ELCA study groups, youth groups and other educational settings. Order through the ELCA Distribution Service, 1-800-328-4648.

Open our eyes to see that peace must be waged, risen Savior, and love us to be about it.

♦ RE-Imagining conference examines the church and women

More than 1000 women and men will gather this month in Minneapolis to celebrate the Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women. A global gathering, RE-Imagining offers presentations by theologians, artists and educators; small groups; caucus groups; worship celebrations and pre-conference events such as an urban Native American experience.

Creator God, be with us as we celebrate our diversity.

♦ Lutheran retirees help build churches

Retired ELCA members are putting up church buildings for the ELCA Mission Builders program. Male and female Mission Builders and their spouses usually live on-site in trailers or campers. They participate in the worship and other activities of the congregation, making new friendships and enriching their faith lives as they work.

Thank you for the work and witness of Mission Builders, gracious God.

Remember to add to your daily prayer list people and issues in the news. •

Sonia C. Groenewold is senior news editor of The Lutheran.

The Many-Splendored Thing

Kenneth J. Dale

As one who has been immersed in the culture of Japan for more than four decades, I've come to see many things, including love, in a new light.

The relationship we call love is universal among all cultures, all human beings. Perhaps we could say this on English word *love* describes an ideal relationship—THE ideal relationship, whether we're referring to others, to God or to ourself. But this relationship takes on different shades of meaning as it is expressed in different societies and cultures.

For instance, let's look at love in the Asian context. I'm writing these lines in Hong Kong, where I am a guest professor in the beautiful new Lutheran seminary on mountainside overlooking the high-rise apartment dwellings of the city.

I have visited the romantic Deep Water Bay here, which inspired the movie and song enjoyed by a generation of people around the world, "Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing." That title provides a good theme for our topic. Caring, kindness, sacrifice, courtesy, warm friendliness—these are some of the many splendors of love. Warm friendliness is a facet of love that often marks Americans. Deep bows of formal courtesy are facets that sparkle among the Japanese.

Here in Hong Kong I miss the warm friendliness and the polite courtesy, but am discovering a new splendor of love—an efficient manner of caring. It is not clothed with smiles or bows here, but rather in the methodical way the Chinese do what is necessary to care for each other's needs. Maybe we could call it a "cool" love in contrast to the "hot" love of, say, North American romance novels.

Young couples in Hong Kong, however, are a different matter. On the crowded subways here you frequently see

Love: an intense affectionate concern for another person.

boy and his girlfriend touching, embracing and often kissing in the public space. This sight would be uncommon in Japan, where expression of feeling, especially in public, is restrained.

Amae is a Japanese word that cannot be translated into English—and when a word can't be translated, you know it expresses something unique to its culture. *Amae* describes a relationship of subtle dependence of one person upon another. In return, the other is obliged to show special favor to the former. This is a kind of love relationship.

The Japanese don't believe in encouraging independence early in life. They believe that doing so creates too strong a spirit of individualism in the developing child. And they see American individualism as a root cause of many of the ills of American society, where "each for him/herself" is a common philosophy. The Japanese prefer to retain the spirit of *amae*, not only within the family, but also in social relationships in general. This creates a remarkable group harmony, which is, I believe, one of the many splendors of love.

But there is also a universal element in love that transcends time and place. Genuine love is not a concept, neither is it a feeling. It is a behavior—a way of relating to people. In the counseling center in Tokyo where I work, we begin our one-year counseling education course by stating our philosophy of counseling: "Counseling is an act of love." In the course we seek to practice love in the most concrete way.

In the church we speak readily of the love of Christ, our love for God and neighbor, but seldom do we analyze precisely what that means in terms of the everyday.

Although love is a very earthy, practical behavior, the love we show as Christians is rooted in the divine love of our Lord for us. That love showed itself in an immeasurable act of sacrificial love in the death and resurrection of God's Son, our brother, Jesus Christ.

In that act humanity sees the pinnacle of universal love, the many splendors of which filter down through all the cultures of the world. • C

Kenneth Dale went to Japan in 1951 as a Lutheran missionary. He then joined the faculty at the Japan Lutheran College and Seminary in Tokyo, where he started the Counseling Center. He and his wife, Lois, have two sons.



Amae describes a relationship of subtle dependence of one person upon another.

Love-ly Variety

Paul R. Sponheim

Some love in the Bible . . .

John 13:34

Ephesians 5

Romans 13:9

Matthew 22:39

Matthew 5:44

Matthew 22:37

1 Corinthians 14:1

1 John 4:19

Genesis 2:18

1 Corinthians 13:8

Our lives are caught up with the “L” word. From the wedding altar we hear, “I give you this ring as a sign of my love and faithfulness.” Later, over coffee at the reception, someone exclaims, “I love your outfit.” As we drive home that evening, we see a theater marquee featuring Tina Turner asking, “What’s love got to do with it?”

The word *love* is so widely used that it gets stretched way out of recognizable shape. We can become confused about what we really mean when we talk about love.

And some confusion is not surprising, for there is a complexity about love that defies the easy answers. That complexity begs to be truly named love—a “love-ly variety.”

To try to grasp this complexity, let us approach it through four questions: Who am I to love? What is love? How am I to love? Why am I to love?

Who am I to love?

Perhaps this question is asked by someone trying to choose between two—or more—individuals. That is hard enough, but the difficulty multiplies when one looks into Scripture for answers to the same question.

Christians are to “love one another” (John 13:34). Husbands and wives are singled out for love in Ephesians 5. We are to love the neighbor “as yourself” (Romans 13:9 and Matthew 22:39), enemies (Matthew 5:44) and, oh yes, “the Lord your God” (Matthew 22:37).

Clearly the challenge for us is to recognize the differences in such a list. When a bride and groom promise they will love only each other, that doesn't mean the rest of a biblical "love list" no longer applies to them. But if love—with the word and the reality—is not to be wholly stretched out of shape (does one really want to say "I *love* your outfit"?), we need to find some connections in the differences. So we ask another question.

What is love?

Love is not really one emotion, one passion or one action. It is not a single, readily identifiable thing. Perhaps love is more like a family whose members have no single recognizable trait in common, but who rather have a definite resemblance through a combination of traits—their speech patterns, the way they walk, the shape of their nose, the lilt of their laughter—that marks them as belonging together.

Always with love there is a strong desire, or attraction, to reduce the distance between "the other" and self. Or consider this truth: In love there is both self-fulfillment and self-transcendence (a going beyond self).

What does it mean, for instance, to "love your neighbor as yourself"? This is a tricky business, because the road to such love lies between two ditches. Often Christians have been invited to identify love with self-sacrifice and self-denial. And often sin is defined as pride, even for some women whose temptation may be to think too little of themselves and their needs.

Against such tendencies we hear voices reminding us that we cannot love others if we do not love ourselves. The person who focuses on self-sacrifice may come to be so preoccupied with making a martyr of herself that she neglects the real needs of the neighbor at her door.

But watch out for that other ditch! It can be easy to run headlong into the ditch of supposed self-discovery and self-development—where one can be so preoccupied with self that he or she is never quite ready and able to attend to "the other." These extremes tempt all of us *precisely because* the full of love—and the call *to* love—is the call to self-fulfillment (love of self) *and* self-transcendence (love of the other).

Likewise, there are other seemingly contradictory pairs that can help explain the phrase "love-ly variety." For

Love is not really one emotion, one passion or one action. It is not a single, readily identifiable thing.

example: Love is unconditional, yet has expectations; love is comforting, yet involves suffering.

If one part of the pair is present without the tension of the other, maybe we have left the family of love altogether.

How am I to love?

In this question we are not seeking instruction so much as inspiration. It will not do to answer the question, "How am

I to love?" by rejecting it and saying, "Simply relax and let it happen!"

Popular voices in our culture, when speaking of romantic love, often talk of "falling in love," as though all we are to do is to wait for this happy lightning to strike!

Still, there can be an element of truth in such talk. Maybe instead we

should speak of how love is a gift, and that gift can become a goal or task. So Paul exhorts the Corinthians: "Make love your aim" (1 Corinthians 14:1).

Why am I to love?

The short answer to this question is found in 1 John 4:19: "We love because God first loved us."

What does this mean? What if we read in John's words a description of *our very being as created by God*? Perhaps then we'd see that in the creative act God's divine trinity of love overflows in such a way as to create beings who are, in truth, made for love? And, of course, not only God's loving work of creation, but also of redemption and sanctification is part of the love picture of our lives.

Carrying the image further, we could say: Since we are made for love, it is indeed not good that anyone should be alone (Genesis 2:18). And so our loving Creator seeks to give us "others" in special ways, in community, so that we may love and be loved.

It is true that we can fail in this: We can turn away from love and we can twist and distort love. But we cannot evict the loving Creator from our lives. As Paul tells the Corinthians, "Love never ends" (1 Corinthians 13:8).

Neither does the gift and task of love end, as our Creator God continues to give us "the other" in love-ly variety. • 6

Paul R. Sponheim is in his 25th year of teaching at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary in St. Paul. His most recent book is Faith and the Other: A Relational Theology (Fortress, 1993).

**Love is unconditional,
yet has expectations;
love is comforting,
yet involves suffering.**

Ah, the Windmill!

Linda Janssen Gjere

It's hot. Nebraska hot. Steamy, with temperatures in the 90s and that hard, hot wind out of the south that blasts your skin. The drying wind lays down tall grass and flowers, flowing fast—making wheat fields look like a field of weeds at the base of a wide, clear stream just before the water-

It's too hot to do much more than breathe, and the wind blows and the grass and trees rustle. At the same time the welcome clack and groan of the windmill blades in the hot, steady current of air draws in cold water to the tank for your cattle and horse and dog and you. Ah, the windmill!

Or it's cold. The north wind carries sleet and snow into your back as you walk away from an icy blast that cuts through wool and insulation.

Against the northern stream of the windmill rotors purr and fill the batteries that fuel the heating element that warms the bath water to soothe your aching bones. Ah, the windmill!

Or, it's a gorgeous, balmy day. The light breeze off the lake is just enough to take away the heat and effects, leaving you altogether refreshed. Again, the windmill rotors purr softly against the gentle breeze, charging a battery again. Ah, the windmill!

Before the Rural Electrification Program of the 1930s, wind generators were an integral part of rural life in the United States. Millions of wind generators were used to light farms and charge batteries. They've been so much a part of Nebraska skylines that license plates have featured them.

Still today—though with less noise and with continually advancing technology—the wind can run your refrigerator or washer/dryer or perhaps, this wet, wet year, your dehumidifier and sump pump. Modern windmills are metal, not wood. They are quiet, and they can be used in city and suburb settings as well as in the country.

All you do is combine two God-givens—wind and human ingenuity—to get non-polluting, environmentally safe power to care for ourselves and God's creation. Ah, the windmill!

For more information on windmills, contact your county extension agent. Your community library will also have information on alternative energy sources. • A

Linda Janssen Gjere is communications director for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Nebraska Synod. She is a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Omaha.

Gladys Moore: Joyful, Thankful and Prayerful

Karen Bates-Olson

The Rev. Gladys Moore is a musician, prolific writer of hymns and assistant to the bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's New Jersey Synod.

Pastor Moore believes, with Martin Luther, that "music is the handmaid of theology," and her belief has led to the writing of many songs commissioned by the church. Some of her works include "O, Jesus, Lead Us," commissioned by the ELCA's Lutheran Laity Movement for American Mission Sunday; "God's People Puzzle" for a vacation Bible school series published by Fortress Press in the mid-1980s; and "Joyful Thankful and Prayerful" for Women of the ELCA.

Gladys spent her early years in Detroit, a member of John Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. When her family moved to Philadelphia, she joined the United Methodist Church. Her youth was steeped in choir, Sunday school and other church groups.

It was in Philadelphia, Moore says, that she first "got into music." She learned to play the string bass through the public schools and from there, picked up trumpet and guitar.

It was the Holy Spirit, she professes, that made her "turn Lutheran." In college she studied to be an elementary-school teacher. While teaching, some of Gladys' students invited her to attend their Lutheran church. She did, and later became an active member.

Gladys had been at Immanuel Lutheran in East Lansdowne, Pennsylvania, for a year, singing in the choir and working with the youth, when she became involved in a "Word and Witness" Bible study group. That group was to become pivotal in her life, for it was through it that she felt God calling her to "do something more." She went to Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia "as an experiment," she recalls trying to follow the Spirit.

In her internship year, Moore sensed that her call to the ordained ministry was confirmed. After graduating, she served Bethany Lutheran in Jersey City, New Jersey, for five and-a-half years.

Then Moore took a leave from call to study music a

Montclair State College in New Jersey. She wanted time to reflect on her call and to see where and how God wanted her to serve. Four months later that reflection led to the realization that she missed pastoral ministry. Soon her need for pastoral ministry connected with the church's need for her gifts—and she was called to serve as an assistant to the bishop of the New Jersey synod in the ELCA.

Gladys Moore is well known as a leader for youth gatherings and women's groups, often leading Bible study and combining it with her music. She has brought more than one women's convention to its feet with her faith-filled, stirring conditions.

"God's Word Alive and Active," one of Moore's hymns, was featured as a devotion in the March 1992 issue of *Lutheran Woman Today*. Moore was commissioned to write the hymn in 1991 for the 175th anniversary of the American Bible Society. The society told her that they wanted their anniversary song to have new words to a familiar tune and to underscore their theme, "God's Word Alive and Active."

Moore chose the tune "Aurelia"—best known as the music for the hymn "The Church's One Foundation"—and soon her hymn's words were giving glad and mighty witness to the power of God's word and to the role of Christian community.

Devotion

Whenever and wherever it is planted, God's word bears fruit. As the seed flourishes in good soil, so God's word "alive and active" among God's people gives comfort, calm, freedom, community.

God's word can be proclaimed in all kinds of ways. We share the word when we give a cup of cold water in Jesus' name. We share it when we forgive in Jesus' name, when we invite another to worship, when we speak together of the promises in Christ.

We share the word that grows into great fruit, too, when we sing it. Indeed, if music is the "handmaid of theology," perhaps there is no better way to witness than to sing the story of Jesus. In our song, others can catch the music, and the heart, of joy and hope in Christ. •



The Rev. Gladys Moore

The Rev. Karen Bates-Olson serves as associate pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Spokane, Washington.

Friends Against the Odds

Today a little girl held hands with my son. Watching, I blessed her silently and wept. In that tender moment, the door of my child's future opened wider than I'd ever dared to imagine.

Aaron is seven. He has Down syndrome and some autistic characteristics as the result of a series of seizures called "infantile spasms."

Since his seizures ended, Aaron has made progress. He walks and climbs now. He uses some sign language and can shake his head for yes and no. He still resists playing with most toys, but slowly he has become more social.

Unfortunately, instead of avoiding people, Aaron began pinching, scratching and pushing them from time to time. I was at Aaron's school with my husband today. In an hour-long meeting with school personnel, we sweated out a strategy to address Aaron's aggressive behavior toward other children in his special-education class for children with severe disabilities.

My husband left for work as soon as the meeting ended. He'd be dealing with his anguish alone as he drove to his office. I said good-bye to the teacher and administrators in a numb voice.

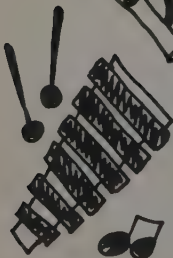
"Aaron joins the Head Start preschool kids for music this morning," said Leta, a classroom aide. "Why don't you sit out of sight and watch for a moment?"

I remembered Leta had told me Aaron really enjoyed this part of his day and was behaving nicely.

"OK," I replied, following Leta and Aaron into an adjacent room. I was completely unprepared for what happened next.

"This is my best friend, Aaron." A dark-haired girl had taken his hand in hers and was speaking to a girl in front of her.

My breath came in tight gulps. Except for Aaron's sister, only a few children had tried to make overtures to him, and he'd rejected these tentative efforts. Tears of gratitude filled my eyes.



The girl stroked my son's hand with hers, and he gave her what we in our family call his "love touch." Gently, he placed the back of his hand under her chin, gazing at her with head tilted to one side and mouth stretched in a crooked smile. They leaned together, listening to the teacher sing.

"Dear Lord," I prayed, "thank you for this child. How special he is, how accepting of Aaron's strange sounds and gestures that so few have heard or seen as communication. She shows no fear of him, nor does he seem clumsy with her. It's as if he's telling her she is his best friend, too."

Perhaps she has known other children with disabilities. Perhaps her parents have instilled in her, at such an early age, a basic kindness and tolerance of differences. Or maybe she is, like my son, one of those marvels you meet once or twice in a lifetime—someone who can converse with your soul, directly, with no need for words.

The children stood up. Aaron lumbered to his feet, standing silently as the others sang "Five Little Ducks Went Out One Day." The little girl took his hands and tried to uncurl the right number of stubby fingers. She pressed his palms together in a clapping motion to imitate the clacking of a duck.

It had been almost 15 minutes, such a long time for Aaron to pay attention! The children sat down again, and so did he. Aaron put his arm around the girl's shoulder. I waited for him to pull her long ponytail. He took hold of the hair, but the girl just reached back and patted his hand. Aaron let go; they leaned together again.

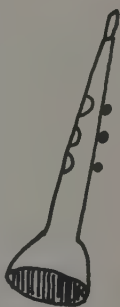
I can't even remember when I stopped hoping for friends for Aaron. Years ago, anyway. Today, I realized how lonely Aaron must be much of the time.

There are some people who believe that "special education" should be confined to separate campuses or separate classrooms. True, there are challenges. Nevertheless, I've worked with Aaron's teachers to find ways of involving Aaron with nondisabled children whenever possible.

Until today, I supported integrated educational opportunities because it just made good sense. I didn't have personal proof. Now I do.

At last, my son has a friend. She has dark brown hair, soft brown eyes and a gentle way. And at last, my son is a friend. He has freckles on his nose, blue eyes that cross sometimes and smile as big as his heart. Bless them both. • AC

Barbara Sande Dimmitt lives in Elk Grove, California, with her husband, Michael, and their children, Aaron and Rachel.



One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism

Life Together

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
(Harper San Francisco,
1954; \$10.00).

Judy Hoshek

"We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as fellow members of the body of Christ, children of the same heavenly Father, and workers with us in the kingdom of God" (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, p. 125).

These words offer a sense of belonging, a new identity and incorporation into community. They are the words that we, the congregation, speak to new members in the faith at every Baptism—that sacrament of grace that brings us into the Christian community.

How are we to comprehend this mystery we call the "Christian community"? Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*, first published in 1938, helps us address the issue. This slim volume describes and documents biblically the life of a clandestine seminary of 25 vicars and their teachers in Germany during World War II. Sharing a common life in emergency housing, they learned what it means to be a Christian community. Bonhoeffer was imprisoned for his participation in the resistance to Adolf Hitler and his Nazi government

and was executed on April 8, 1945. *Life Together* has become a classic exposition of Christian community.

One of the appeals of *Life Together* is its intense practicality.

Readers have a strong sense that Bonhoeffer is not being theoretical as he outlines the components, blessings and pitfalls of life together in Christ. His laboratory was one of living people, susceptible to the reality that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves.

**How are we to comprehend
this mystery we call
"Christian community"?**

That admission, up front, frames the point Bonhoeffer stresses throughout: Christian community is a gift of God. We ourselves cannot create it or sustain it. It exists by God's grace, through the power of the Holy Spirit, by the saving work of Jesus Christ. That's a freeing realization. It means that my participation in the community can be a joy and my responsibilities a privilege—opportunities rather than burdens—to live in the love God bestows on me in Baptism.

Christian communities are diverse. They do not depend on sameness of interest or culture or habit, and while we may experience exhilaration in the context of Christian community, that is not primarily what such communities are about. Christian community is not something for which we strive. It is the reality we are given.

Bonhoeffer offers a structure for the day lived in Christian community, which includes corporate worship in which we hear the Word, sing the songs of praise and pray together. His explanation of the treasury of the psalms draws us to our knees to pray and to gain these ancient words as our own.

Christian community, like faith, is a gift, and as such faith, while we do nothing to create or earn it,

we can block it. But Bonhoeffer nudges us further, highlighting how potential temptations can become ministry possibilities for those linked to each other by one Lord, one faith, one Baptism: the ministry of holding one's tongue, the ministry of meekness, of listening, of helpfulness, of bearing, of proclaiming. This is no utopian vision, but a realistic look at how God's grace can transform us when we allow God's spirit of servanthood to take hold.

Life Together reminds us of the treasure that is ours by our Baptism. The next time we welcome someone into the Lord's family, let us recommit ourselves to the Christian community and say an extra "Alleluia!" for the wonder of the gift of life together. • CG

Judy Hoshek is assistant to the bishop of the Northeastern Ohio Synod and a member of the Lutheran Deaconess Conference.

Women of the ELCA has produced a video of a seminar on Christian community, *Community: God's Gift of Grace*, facilitated by deaconess Karen Melang, who uses *Life Together* as the basis for the discussion. The video, in four segments, would serve well in retreat, Bible class or women's group meetings.

Discussion questions are incorporated into the video, and an accompanying guide provides talk starters, personal reflection opportunities and action possibilities.

The video is available on a free-loan basis from ELCA Resource Centers. Call the ELCA Resource Information Service (1-800-638-3522) for the resource center nearest you.

—J.H.

REVIEWS

The Four Loves

by C.S. Lewis
(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971;
\$6.95).

C.S. Lewis has woven together his views on the four loves he considers a common part of everyone's life—whether one realizes it or not. He describes how religion is a necessary part of the first three loves he addresses: *affection*, *eros* and *friendship*. The fourth love he deals with, *charity*, represents God's love and grace. This is where the author unites human loves with God love. Lewis' description of the transformation of our natural human love into charity, and how it becomes an instrument of God, is exciting.

Once again Lewis proves himself worthy of praise for his insight into a challenging topic. Readers will continue to appreciate this classic thought-provoking book.

*Kirsten Moller
Edina, Minnesota*

Sex, Love, or Infatuation: How Can I Really Know?

by Ray E. Short
(Augsburg, 1990; \$5.99).

What *is* real love? How do I find it? How can I tell if something is love or just sexual attraction and infatuation?

Ray Short approaches these questions from a Christian perspective in a down-to-earth style. He provides some clues on how to tell where your relationship stands: What was the initial attraction? Do you feel jealous often? How do your

family and friends see the relationship? He also provides insights into what makes a relationship last for a lifetime, like honesty and trust, no appearances or physical attraction.

This book would be helpful for high-schoolers who are involved in relationships and may have questions. Short stresses the importance of taking time when making life-time decisions.

*Jennifer D. Tibben
Evanston, Illinois*

Feasting for Festivals

by Jan Wilson
(Lion Publishing, 1990; \$16.95).

Customs enrich our lives and strengthen our roots. Since every custom had to originate somewhere sometime, families who aren't steeped in tradition can always create their own or revive ancestral practices. *Feasting for Festivals* can help.

Adults and children alike will enjoy this colorful collection of Christian holiday ideas from around the world. It's brimming with ethnic rituals, festive recipes and novel decorative items to celebrate special occasions in a Christ-centered way.

Truly international in flavor, all recipes are offered in metric, imperial and U.S. measurements. Origins are given for everything from hot cross buns to Advent wreaths with detailed instructions on how to make them. As a gift, this book would brighten any day.

*Nancy W. Olson
Taylor, Wisconsin*

MISSION: *Action* Literacy for All

love to talk about literacy. I love to talk about literacy more than talking about illiteracy for obvious reasons . . . because the former accentuates the positive.

I love to read history and figure out what it is saying to us today.

The 1993 literacy packet combines these two loves: literacy and history. The first part of packet, *VRA: 25 Years of Caring, Giving, Tutoring, Empowering*," shares the highlights of Lutheran women's involvement in literacy—the Volunteer Reading Aides—over the past 25 years. Through abundant years and lean ones, Lutheran women have continued to understand the need to support the cause of literacy. What love!

The second half of the packet, "A History of Literacy in a Nutshell," takes the reader from the earliest form of writing, hieroglyphics, to today's many literacy movements. This section lifts up an interesting dichotomy. There have always been those who want, for all people, literacy and the empowerment that comes with it. And there have always been those who want, only for the chosen few, education and the privi-

Happy 25th Birthday, VRA!

lege that goes with it.

We are told that we are in an increasingly high-tech society. We are told that the need to read, write, compute and use critical thinking is greater than ever and will only become

more intense.

Yet public schools—the largest producer of educated people in the United States—continue to experience deep monetary problems. We hear daily news of schools closing and of crowded and ill-equipped classrooms. The gap between the well-educated and the poorly educated continues to widen.

According to Christ's teachings, what does love for our brothers and sisters demand of us?

According to the U.S. Constitution, what does justice for all demand of us?

Link these two visions and what could we get? Could it be a vision big enough to solve our education crisis? Could we really have literacy for all? I think so. But then, it helps to be an eternal optimist.

For your free literacy packet, call Faith Fretheim at 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2736. •

*Faith Fretheim
Director for Literacy*

MISSION:

Community

A Place at the Table . . .

"Rejoice in hope. . . . Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers."

Romans 12:12a, 13,
New Revised Standard Version

This text provides the framework for stewardship interpretation in the 1993-1996 triennium. What wonderful words of comfort and challenge, words that expand the circle of the community of hope!

Rejoice in hope. In a day when the national debt—and possibly our own—is out of control; when gangs, drugs, and physical and sexual violence are rampant, the steward is called to rejoice in hope. Our stewardship calls for vision that is farsighted as well as nearsighted. We must be *farsighted* to look above and beyond what we see as the realities of daily life to trust in God's presence and security. We must be *near-sighted* to live that trust in the everyday needs around us.

Contribute to the needs of the saints. This is the kind of stewardship we all know: giving. In this triennium the Women of the ELCA emphasis is women and children in poverty. Let's make an effort in this triennium not only to give, but to receive from women and children

living in poverty. Receiving from those we serve is a form of stewardship that helps us give what really needed and not just what we think needed or what we want to be needed. Mutual giving and receiving happens where there is equality—no "haves" and "have nots."

Extend hospitality to strangers (the Revised Standard Version of the Bible says, "*practice hospitality*"). A stranger is someone who is perceived to be outside the community. Hospitality implies providing a place at the table. In God's community of grace, everyone has a place at the family/community table and therefore, the stranger is no longer a stranger.

For you and me—who once were strangers and are no longer—our rejoicing will be complete when the circle of God's community practices hospitality every day and in every circumstance. Practice welcoming people into their place at the table in your family, your congregation, your community. •

Bonnie Belasic
Director for Communication
and Stewardship
Interpretation

MISSION:

Growth

Embracing Self and Others

The year 1994 will herald a first in leadership development in churchwide Women of the ELCA. Leadership training will be offered to *all women* in ELCA congregations in 1994 and 1995, not only to elected leadership.

As a means of carrying out the mission statement of Women of the ELCA to empower women in their ministries, this training is designed to encourage women to identify, affirm, develop and use their gifts in church and world. Among Christian women today there is increasing awareness of the importance of acknowledging the source of our power in Christ as we experience new roles in the '90s. We need to understand our gifts and our diversity, embrace them, support and empower one another. So the 1994 theme for the leadership training is "Embracing Self and Others."

The training events are expected to reach 8000 women in the next two years. The pilots held so far this year confirmed the planning committee's view that an "everyman" leadership model meets the needs of Women of the ELCA and women in the ELCA.

"Embracing Self and Others" is a two-session, 8- to 12-hour experience open to all ELCA women. In it

women will seek to answer questions like: Do I understand Christ's love for me and therefore show that love in my daily life? Have I been able to identify my gifts and skills so that I can be more effective at home, at work, at church, at play? Do I understand and respect diversity? Do I work toward loving others as God loves them? Am I a leader? What are some biblical models for leadership? Is there a place for me to serve or minister in my own home, congregation, community?

This workshop is designed to foster individual growth, knowledge and skill development. Each woman receives a notebook of materials and will identify her own strengths and weaknesses. She will also learn of others and their styles, use biblical stories to probe God's love, explore models for leadership and opportunities for ministry.

These training events are held in conjunction with synodical women's organization conventions, or SWOs can request the event be done as a stand-alone retreat. Contact your SWO president to see when the training is in your area. •

Beckie M. Steele
Director for Leadership
Development

A Love Story

Marie Sundet

She gave birth to their eight children.

He was a diligent farmer and raised crops and livestock to keep the clan fed.

She worked outdoors, cooked, cleaned, sewed, canned, mothered, laughed and cried.

He affirmed with secretive smiles and meaningful squeezes.

She easily adjusted to being "grandma."

He quietly smiled his gratitude each time he became "grandpa."

She became painfully weaker with arthritis.

He arranged necessary moves to appropriate living quarters.

She endured several surgeries for replacement of arthritic joints.

He spent hours at the hospital every day.

She began to lose her vision.

He became her eyes.

She needed a hoist and the help of two people to move from bed to wheelchair and back again.

He helped her decide to move to a care center after her hospitalization.

She went, and could no longer feed herself.

He brought an orange to feed her every afternoon.

She gave his solitary life purpose.

He gave hers meaning and love.

She said, "Dad does so well."

He said, "One lady comes in to talk to mom every night and give her a little 'kuss' (German words still creep in when he speaks of things close to his heart). She's the kind of visitor mom needs."

She became physically helpless but remains mentally very alert.

He became a compassionate caretaker, this man of the fields and out-of-doors.

She said, "We talk about so many things. We've been given this special time."

He said, "Nobody knows how she feels or understands her misery."

I peek into her room for another good-bye before leaving for home. Dad is sitting with his arms crossed on the edge of mom's bed, just looking—looking at her as she dozes.

This is devotion. This love I see between my mother and my father.

Thank you, God, for their example. •

Marie Sundet is a member and preschool teacher at First Lutheran Church, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She is married with four grown daughters and four grandchildren.

Advent Stirrings and LWT

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come" (prayer for First Sunday in Advent, *Lutheran Book of Worship*).

This forceful petition to our Lord calls upon God to be active in our lives. God's Word stirs in us when we allow that word to be "alive and active." What better time than Advent to rejoice in that stirring! Not only for ourselves—but for others.

Lutheran Woman Today—through its devotions, reflections, articles, prayers and calls to ac-

tion—seeks to help people "be stirred" by God's Word. This Advent you can help someone you care about come face-to-face with God's stirring power and love. You can send them a one-year gift subscription to LWT *and* link it with a commitment to pray for them in an intentional way. When you provide a gift subscription, you will receive a "Be Stirred by the Word" self-stick notepad. Use the form below to help someone "Be Stirred by the Word."

(If ordering more than one subscription, you may photocopy the form, or attach a separate sheet of paper with additional names.)

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